

U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Virginia

2100 Jamieson Avenue (703)299-3700
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 Fax: 703-549-5202

Paul J. McNulty
United States Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Alexandria, Virginia
December 19, 2003

For further information contact
Sam Dibbley 703-842-4050

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Peter D. Keisler, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division, U.S. Department of Justice, announced that physician Marvin J. Brown and pharmacist Luke J. Coukos pleaded guilty today to charges relating to the illegally selling of controlled substances and other prescription drugs over the Internet to consumers through various websites. Brown pleaded guilty to conspiring to unlawfully distribute and dispense Schedule III and IV controlled substances other than for a legitimate medical purpose and not in the usual course of professional practice. Coukos pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate the Controlled Substances Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Brown and Coukos each face 5 years imprisonment when sentenced by the Honorable Leonie M. Brinkema, United States District Judge. Brown will be sentenced on April 16, 2004, and Coukos on March 12, 2004.

The charges to which Brown and Coukos pleaded guilty today are related to the 108 count indictment returned by a grand jury in this district against Vincent K. Chhabra and nine other individuals charging that Chhabra and his co-conspirators used an "online ordering process" to allow customers to order prescription controlled substance drugs over the Internet, through such websites as "www.get-it-on.com." When customers ordered drugs online, the indictment charges that the customers chose the type, quantity, and dose of controlled substances they wanted, and answered some questions on a medical form. However, no one checked the accuracy of the information that customers provided, as the Controlled Substances Act requires; and customers obtained the drugs without ever meeting a doctor face-to-face, as required by law.

"These convictions are a significant step forward in our effort to stop drug trafficking on the Internet," said Paul McNulty.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Food and Drug Administration's Office of Criminal Investigations, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Assistant United States Attorney James P. Gillis, Department of Justice, Office of Consumer Litigation, Attorneys Linda I. Marks and Mary Beth Schultz, and DOJ Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section Attorney Karen Taylor are handling the prosecution for the government.